

**Minutes**  
**King County Rural Forest Commission**  
**March 17, 2004**  
**Preston Community Center**

*Commissioners present:* Jean Bouffard, Dennis Dart, Lee Kahn, Fred McCarty, Doug McClelland, Doug Schindler, Julie Stangell

*Commissioners absent:* Gordon Bradley, Rudy Edwards, Bill Kombol, Matt Mattson, Dave Warren

*Exofficio members:*

*Staff:* Benj Wadsworth

*Guests:* Alex Kamola, Julie Keough

Doug McClelland called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

**Minutes Approval**

Motion 1-304 "To adopt the January 2004 minutes as written."

Julie Keough clarified that her comment at the December meeting that an 80-acre lot with 20 yr old trees near Black Diamond is worth \$250,000 was inaccurate. In fact, it is probably worth a lot more.

Motion moved, seconded and approved.

**Staff Report**

Benj commented that he sent the letter from the RFC to the Friends of Rock Creek commenting on their conservation plan. The letter essentially reiterates the importance of maintaining working forests. Benj is working on completing a letter from WLRD staff. FRCV hopes to complete a second draft in a few months.

Benj distributed financial disclosure forms for members to complete. They need to be submitted by April 15.

The Draft 2004 Comprehensive Plan and the Critical Areas Ordinance have been transmitted to Council. Benj will keep the RFC posted on any developments. There will be opportunities to comment during the Council review process.

Staff met with Doug McClelland, Dennis, Fred and Lee in February to discuss the stewardship plans for Ring Hill and Sugarloaf. The main recommendation was that staff should develop a business plan that projects activities and costs on all of the working forest properties for the next few years. Staff should also consider doing a timber inventory of the four working forest properties to inform such a plan. This document would accompany the individual stewardship plans. Staff will hopefully have something to bring back to the RFC at the May meeting. Benj commented that one goal of the business plan is to look carefully at what staff can realistically do with a limited budget. They do not want to pursue activities that do not make sense financially.

Julie Keough commented that Weyerhaeuser often gets requests from groups like Search and Rescue to use their land. She thinks that there might be an opportunity for KC to generate income from user groups. Benj commented that the RFC looked into this a while ago in an effort to develop ways for private landowners to generate additional income and stay in forestry. They concluded that there may be such sources, but they don't amount to much in the larger scheme of things.

Staff has completed the forest practice application for the harvest on Taylor Mountain. They hope to put the sale out to bid in mid-April. Doug Schindler asked about public relations regarding the harvest. Staff is working on this.

Benj has advertised for openings on the RFC. Several people have applied for the various openings. Benj will be completing that process soon. Jim Franzel, the new district ranger for the North Bend District of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest will be replacing Rudy Edwards, who has taken on other responsibilities for the USFS.

Benj passed on information about the Washington Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation. Julie Keough attended this year. Kathy Creahan and Doug McClelland have attended in the past. It is a 2-yr program involving several days a month and a couple of extended 1-2 week trips. The program is intended to educate people in the natural resource fields about public policy and public relations. It is mostly funded by the foundation.

Amy Grotta, the new WSU Extension forester, gave a summary of the forest stewardship classes. The next class begins April 21 in Carnation. She will serve as an ex-officio member of the RFC.

### **Patterson Creek project**

Dennis Dart gave an update on the Patterson Creek Preserve (formerly Tremont) project. The property was originally owned by Port Blakely. It is roughly 260 acres outside Fall City. Port Blakely had vested a plat for 200 homes. There were a number of controversies regarding zoning. Eventually, Cascade Land Conservancy brokered a deal that would limit the development to thirty 3-acre lots on half of the property, and the other half will be managed as forest. CLC owns the forested half, and King County owns a conservation easement on the property and will receive the net revenue on any timber harvest. CLC has contracted International Forestry to manage the forest. The forest was high-graded in the 20s or 30s. There is currently a mixed stand of cedar and big-leaf maple. The maple is in decline. CLC's goal is to develop a late-seral stage forest. This will take time and involve many entries. CLC wants to use primarily single tree selection with some group selection of groups no more than 2.5 acres in size. There should never be more than 30% of the forest in under-20 age class. This year, much of the property, including the residential lots, will be thinned. The residential lots have to maintain a certain amount of forest cover. Dennis displayed a map of the project.

There is a wetland on the property with an existing road that crosses it. DDES is requiring that CLC evaluate building a new road rather than upgrading the existing road. DDES is in the process of determining if CLC will have to follow the KC Surface Water Manual with regard to the forest roads on the property. Also, there are two 40% slopes on the property that DDES is requiring to be buffered, although a geotech has approved harvesting on the slopes. Dennis is hoping that the RFC will submit a comment to the County about the difficulties that he is encountering. He feels that they are representative of the issues that are affecting small forest landowners.

King County DNRP approved the forest stewardship plan, but DDES has the enforcement responsibility. This is causing problems. Doug McClelland suggested that it would help for Dennis to track the costs of the project as an illustration of how much it costs to do forestry when King County has jurisdiction. Dennis has already received a \$2400 bill and will likely have to spend \$11,000 dollars on the thinning project. CLC is requiring that Dennis mark all of the trees and be on site during the harvest. Julie Keough reiterated that the requirement to follow the Surface Water Manual and the 40% slope rule make forestry extremely difficult.

### **WADNR Sustainable Harvest Calculation**

Doug McClelland gave a summary of WADNR's sustainable harvest calculation. Every 10 years, WADNR revisits its sustainable harvest calculation. It is driven by the Habitat Conservation Plan. Doug summarized the history of the WA State Trust lands. Trust lands are managed to provide environmental, economic and social benefits for the trusts (schools, counties, etc.). They must also provide for the Trusts. Those lands managed in trust for the

counties are called Forest Board lands. They must be managed to support the timber industry. They do not have to be managed for highest and best use. 78% of the revenue off of forest board lands goes to the local taxing districts. The financial success of WADNR forestland management depends on acceptance by the public. Most of the trust lands are adjacent to federal forestlands or industrial forestlands.

WADNR put together the HCP in order to manage their lands comprehensively rather than focusing on protecting individual spotted owl circles. The HCP addresses the needs of about 80 different terrestrial species as well as fish.

The sustainable harvest calculation addresses the need to meet the requirements of the HCP and at the same time meet the financial obligations of the trusts. The preferred alternative endorsed by the Board of Natural Resources a few weeks ago involves an active strategy rather than a passive one. With this strategy, WADNR will conduct thinning projects in areas that were previously left untouched. The allowable cut will increase, but the result will be more diverse, complex forests. Harvests have to go through SEPA, but they do take less time today than they used to – about 6 months as opposed to 12- 18 months. Presently, WADNR operates on about 45% of the landscape. Under the preferred alternative, they would be operating on 63% of the landscape, and eventually 85% of the landscape. The result will be less impact on more acreage as opposed to more impact on less acreage – more thinnings and partial harvests. The rotation ages will vary across the landscape. The success will depend on there being operational certainty, the price of the timber, lack of lawsuits, and additional staff. Doug distributed a letter submitted by the Washington Environmental Council with responses by WADNR in the margins. WEC is pushing WADNR to obtain FSC certification. The Board of Natural Resources wants to complete the environmental, social and economic analysis of the preferred alternative before making a decision regarding FSC.

Julie Keough distributed an insert from this morning's Seattle Times. "Section Z" is a publication by Ecotrust promoting FSC wood. The publication encourages the public to write to WADNR and encourage the agency to certify its forestland under FSC. Commissioner Sutherland wants to complete the sustainable harvest process first and then look closely at FSC and SFI to determine if either, or both, make sense for WADNR. Julie commented that Weyerhaeuser hears a lot about certification, but in reality, most people do not care. There is a vocal minority that is pushing for it.

Doug commented that there is a real need for education about the realities of forest management. As an example, many of the buffers that would be harvested under the preferred alternative are young managed stands because they were originally clearcut before the Forest Practice Rules were implemented. They are in need of management just to be restored to a healthy condition. There is a lack of understanding about the Forest Practice Rules.

## **Riparian Reserves**

Doug McClelland is looking for input from the RFC regarding the use of funds to purchase riparian easements on working forestland. He feels that there is agreement among the conservation community that the primary concern with regard to conserving working forests is to purchase the development rights so that the forest is not converted to residential uses. However, some individuals feel that there is a need for a strategy to create late-successional forests in the riparian corridors, to do a better job of forestry than is dictated by the forest practice rules. Dennis commented that the rules are actually designed to create late-successional forests in the riparian areas. The question revolves around the width of the buffers.

Under a pending agreement, WADNR may be receiving biosolids land from King County that has a conservation easement on the stream. Doug wonders why we are spending money on additional protection in the corridors. Are we sending a message to the public that the Forest Practice Rules are not good enough? Are there impacts on other private landowners who do not sell easements? What will be the real costs in the management of wider buffers? Julie Keough suggested that it is a better use of limited funds to buy more development rights on land rather than increasing buffers. Once land is acquired, decisions can later be made about buffers. Doug Schindler suggested that buying additional buffers sends a message to the public that they cannot trust government agencies to manage land. He also wonders how a non-profit will manage or monitor such an easement. Julie Keough commented that she has been approached to sell expanded buffers on Weyerhaeuser lands, but she is not generally interested because she does not think that they will be helpful. Doug commented that as a forestland manager for WADNR, he is concerned about the long term implications of agreeing to manage land that has riparian easements placed on it. Dennis commented that the Forest Practice Rules are designed to be adaptive, so if they are not working, they will be changed. CMER's role is to study the effectiveness of the rules. Julie Keough commented that she would not sell a riparian easement strictly from a management standpoint. Someone else having an ownership interest in Weyerhaeuser land could make management more difficult and thus increase management costs. If she is unwilling to sell, then Weyerhaeuser looks like the bad guy. Benj commented that the root of the problem may be a lack of understanding by the public that in many cases there is a need for management in the riparian areas – these are not natural forests that we are talking about. Lee Kahn suggested that the environmental groups could be more helpful by pushing for additional funding for the Small Forest Landowner Riparian Easement Program so as to keep small forest landowners in forestry and avoid conversion.

**Next meeting**

Wednesday, May 12, 10:00 – 1:00, Preston Community Center. Doug McClelland suggested including a discussion about forestry messaging on the agenda.

Note - the meeting schedule for the next 3 months is as follows:

May 12

June 9

August 11